

**Remarks**

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the above amendments and in light of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 and 6-24 are pending in the application; Claims 1, 2, 6-10, 17, and 21-24 having been amended by way of the present response. Applicants respectfully assert that support for the changes to the claims is self-evident from the originally filed disclosure, including the original claims, and that therefore no new matter has been added.

In the Office Action Claims 1, 3, 4, 7-9, 11-13, and 15-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,963,699 to Tanaka et al. (Tanaka) in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,325,549 to Shevchuk.<sup>1</sup>

Initially, Applicants express thanks for the Examiner's indication that Claims 2, 6, 10, 14, and 21-24 recite allowable subject matter, such that the claims although having been objected to would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. In response, Applicants have so-rewritten Claims 2, 10, and 21-24, and have amended Claim 6 to depend from Claim 2. Thus, in accordance with the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, Applicants respectfully request the allowance of Claims 2, 6, 10, and 21-24.

As stated above Claims 1, 3, 4, 7-9, 11-13, and 15-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Tanaka in view of Shevchuk. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejection of the claims has been overcome for the following reasons.

The present invention is directed to methods for coupling plastic optical fiber (e.g., as recited in independent Claim 1), as well as coupling units (e.g., as recited in independent Claims 9 and 17). Independent Claims 1, 9, and 17 each recite a holder including a plurality

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<sup>1</sup> Applicants respectfully assert that the rejection is understood to apply to Claim 3, rather than Claim 2, based on the Examiner's indication of allowable subject matter, as well as the Examiner's statements with respect to the reasons for the rejection of the claims.

of protrusions contacting a plurality of sides of a cover. The cover is disposed within a perimeter defined by the plurality of protrusions.

Regarding the rejection of independent Claim 1, Tanaka is directed to an optical fiber mechanical splice. As shown in Figures 4 and 5, for example, of Tanaka, an optical fiber mechanical splice 1 enables connection of two optical fibers 7 by inserting wedges 24 into wedge insertion openings 25 to relieve compression force between a base member 2 and the lid member 3.<sup>2</sup>

Applicants respectfully assert that Tanaka does not teach or suggest, however, the claimed features of a holder including a plurality of protrusions contacting a plurality of sides of a cover, the cover disposed within a perimeter defined by the plurality of protrusions, as recited in independent Claim 1. Specifically, Applicants respectfully assert that Tanaka does not show or state the base member 2 including a plurality of protrusions, and the lid member 3 disposed within a perimeter defined by the plurality of protrusions of the base member 2, for example.

The Office Action relies on Shevchuk to remedy the deficiencies of Tanaka. Applicants respectfully assert, however, that Shevchuk also does not teach or suggest the claimed features of a holder including a plurality of protrusions contacting a plurality of sides of a cover, the cover disposed within a perimeter defined by the plurality of protrusions, as recited in independent Claim 1. Applicants respectfully note that Shevchuk appears to have been used in the Office Action only to teach plastic optical fibers.

Thus, for the above reasons, Applicants respectfully assert that none of Tanaka and Shevchuk, whether taken alone or in combination, teaches or suggests the claimed features recited in independent Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection

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<sup>2</sup> Column 6, lines 52-58.

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of independent Claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn, and the allowance of independent Claim 1.

Applicants respectfully assert that independent Claims 9 and 17 are allowable for reasons similar to those of independent Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of independent Claims 9 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn, and the allowance of independent Claims 9 and 17.

Applicants respectfully assert that Claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11-16, and 18-20 are allowable for the same reasons as independent Claims 1, 9, and 17 from which they depend, as well as for their own features. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the rejection and objection to dependent Claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11-16, and 18-20 be withdrawn, and the allowance of dependent Claims 3, 4, 7, 8, 11-16, and 18-20.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-4 and 6-24 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

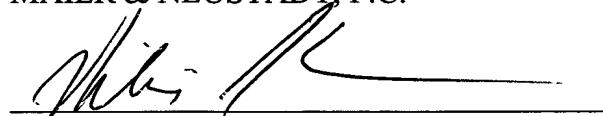
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